

MARITIME

ANCHOR

The only surprize I feel at the last steps taken with regard to the new Constitution, is that it does not strike the well meaning adversaries themselves with the necessity of some anchor for the fluctuations which threaten shipwreck to our liberty.

James Madison to Archibald Stuart, New York
14 December 1787 (CC 2, 435)

ANOTHER BARK

The old federal constitution is like a ship bearing under the weight of a tempest; it is trembling and just on the point of sinking. If we have not another bark to take us up, we shall all go down together.

William Pierce to St. George Tucker, New York
28 September 1787 (RCS SUPPL. GA., #13, p. 10)

BEAUTIFUL SHIP

That the latter the beautiful ship *Constitution* far exceeded in *goodness* the expectation of the Committee; that in their judgment (and they differ not in opinion from some of the first characters in Europe or America) this ship on the *whole, is far superior* to any now *extant*.

Ship News, *Boston Gazette*, 4 February 1788 (RCS MASS., 857)

FOEDERAL SHIP

I consider the foederal Ship as nearly moored. Let the proper officers now repair her rigging, and stop her leaks. I am only a passenger.

Benjamin Rush to Noah Webster, Philadelphia
13 February 1788 (RCS SUPPL. PA., #426, p. 883)



The FEDERAL SHIP—A SONG.

Tune *Yankee Doodle*: Or, *my Daddy was in the rebellion*.

Now strike your topsails, imps of war,

Vile screaming owls of faction,

The fed'ral ship ne'er think to mar,

Before she comes to action.

Pennsylvania Mercury, 21 February 1788 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #748-C, p. 301)



Halloa! *the federal Ship!* Halloa!—Upon deck there, Lads! Are you all asleep below in the cabin?—Turn out! or we shall soon get among the breakers!—Avast Pilot, w[h]ere do you mean to bear your course? By Heavens, if you run us ashore, heark'ye, you shall soon fare the fate of old brother JONAH; who slung his hammock in the steerage of a whale, for three nights.

“Jack Tarpaulin,” *Newport Mercury*

1 May 1790 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #550, p. 378)

HARBOR ATTAINABLE

Our situation is like that of a ship at sea, the harbour attainable, but the crew divided by a ridiculous feud, the vessel perishes for want of their co-operation.

“A Citizen, Hudson,” N.Y. *Hudson Weekly Gazette*

3 April 1788 (RCS N.Y., 892)

THE NEW SHIP

The present ship is unfit to encounter the rising storm, it will not answer even for the smooth surface of peace—it must sink—Let us then embark on board the new ship offered by the united wisdom of our country—If it should not on experiment work perfectly well, we shall have the means of repairing or altering it in our possession.

From Henry Knox, New York, September 1787 (RCS MASS., 28; CC I, 280)



The new ship Federal Constitution, that lately arrived into this port.

Boston Independent Chronicle, 1 November 1787 (RCS MASS., 90)



But we are assured by convention itself, that they were unanimous, not barely in putting in some new timbers, but even in building her anew from the keel—and that this new ship, framed out of the sturdy oak of the north, will safely convey the tobacco and the rice of the south, to the most distant parts of the world.

“M.,” *New Hampshire Spy*, 3 November 1787 (RCS N.H., 38)



Not one man in ten thousand in the United States, till within these ten or twelve days, had an idea that, the old ship was to be destroyed, and he put to the alternative of embarking in the new ship presented, or of being left in danger of sinking.

“Federal Farmer,” *Letters to the Republican*
8 November 1787 (RCS N.Y., 211; CC 2, 23)



The news of this agreement (some how) getting aboard her, she slipt her cable, and, without any anchor or ballast, put out to sea, and 'tis said she is engaged as one of the *pilot-boats* to the new ship *Federal Constitution*.

Ship News, *Massachusetts Gazette*
9 November 1787 (RCS MASS., 92)



The new form of government . . . utterly destroys the old ship, and a new one built in which we must embark or sink.

Ebenezer Dibblee to Samuel Peters, Stamford, Conn.
16 November 1787 (RCS CONN., 462)



[Referring to the delay by Congress in calling the first federal elections.] You Inquire after the politicks of the Times &c—I tell you, my friend, the Politicians in general blame the Carpenters for not launching the Hull of the new Ship—and say it will be time enough then to procure Helmsmen, Navigators &c. . . . the new Ship *federal Constitution* now on the Stocks.

Jeremiah Hill to George Thatcher, Biddeford, Maine
9–11 September 1788 (RCS CONG., 67; CC 6, 363)

THE NEW SHIP *FEDERAL CONSTITUTION*

The new ship *Federal Constitution*, that lately arrived into this port, being suspected of having *contraband* goods on board.

“Ship News,” *Boston Independent Chronicle*
1 November 1787 (CC 1, 522)

OUR BARK SAFELY MOORED

As soon as the storm is over, and our bark safely moored, the first wish of my heart will be to devote the whole of my time to the peaceable pursuits of Science, and to the pleasures of social and domestic life.

Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia
28 February 1788 (CC 4, 251)

THE POLITICAL SHIP

I pant for the time when the establishment of the new government, and the Safety to individuals which shall arise from it, shall excuse men who like myself wish only to be passengers, from performing the duty of Sailors on board the political Ship in which our all is embarked.

Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia
28 February 1788 (CC 4, 251)

PORT

However we may differ in political opinions (and such differences are probably conducive to happiness) it is, at present, the duty of every man to regulate his actions, and even his ideas according to the new system of Federal Government. We have been long tossing on the waves of conjecture, and even misery. Why therefore not enter that port which promises security and honor?—a port formed by nature and improved by art—a port where we may safely rest at anchor; and where we may invite others to equal security.

Newport Herald, 23 July 1789 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #315, p. 238)

A REFUGE

The ratification of New-Hampshire has at length completed the Federal Edifice, which will prove a refuge from the storms and tempests of anarchy and divided empire.

New York Daily Advertiser, 1 July 1788 (RCS N.H., 407)

SHEET ANCHOR

You were among the first states that formed an independent constitution; be not among the last in accepting and ratifying the proposed plan of federal government; it is your sheet anchor; and without it, independence may prove a curse.

“Civis” (David Ramsay): To the Citizens of South Carolina
Charleston *Columbian Herald*, 4 February 1788 (RCS S.C., 218; CC 4, 27)

SHEET ANCHOR OF OUR HOPE

The great Mr. Adams has very judiciously observed, to this effect, “That the wisdom and magnanimity which led this great people, to devise, and frame, in a peaceable manner, a form of government, calculated to embrace so many apparently discordant interests, will doubtless lead them to make such alterations and amendments as EXPERIENCE shall dictate to be necessary”—and before we have had this EXPERIENCE, to set the whole business afloat, under the idea of making the Constitution more perfect, is quitting the SHEET ANCHOR of our hope as a people, and trusting to the most uncertain of all contingencies, the caprice and local prejudices of interested individuals, whether this country shall ever be blessed with any settled form of Government, or not. It is therefore, devoutly to be wished, that the FEDERALISTS, which doubtless for the honour of Massachusetts, compose a decided majority, would hold fast their integrity, and steer clear of all anti-federal amendments and suspicious characters, at the ensuing election.

Boston Gazette, 15 December 1788 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #965, p. 458)

SHIP

The ship Constitution yesterday morning made sail to observe the motion of the antifederal fleet.

Ship News, Boston *Independent Chronicle*
25 October 1787 (RCS MASS., 89)



A small Frigate, lately fitted out by the good people of this town for the protection of their liberties, appears to be so much shattered in her *upper works*, by an engagement with the ship *Constitution*.

Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*
31 October 1787 (RCS MASS., 175)



It is expected the Ship CONSTITUTION will be soon launched from Massachusetts-dock.

Ship News, Boston *American Herald*, 28 January 1788 (RCS MASS., 815)



You are jealous of your rights, and afraid to trust Congress—well, jealousy is an evil spirit, and all evil spirits are devils—so far the devil is *in* you. You act in this particular, just like the crew of a ship, which would not trust the helm with *one* of their number because he might *possibly* run it ashore—when by leaving it without a pilot they were *certain* of shipwreck.

Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*
9 April 1788 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #145, p. 129)



The Ship FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, after experiencing a long and dangerous voyage—having suffered much from the *gales* of *faction*, and on the *quicksands* of *Jealousy*—the *Syllas* and *Charabadies* of our coasts.

Massachusetts Centinel, 10 September 1788 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #931, p. 428)



THE SHIP CONSTITUTION, the property of the United States, being now completely fitted for her voyage, is taking in her complement of hands.

Massachusetts Centinel, 15 November 1788 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #954, p. 451)



Having piloted the ship into a secure harbor, what remains, but that we enjoy the fruits of our labor, and make the best improvement of the favors we have received from Heaven?

Newport Herald, 3 September 1789 (RCS R.I., 594)



If it was likened to a *ship*, then it would be asked, how shall we guard it against leaking? how shall we prevent it from running on the rocks and quicksands?

Jeremy Belknap: *The Foresters, An American Tale*
Boston, 1792 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #983, p. 478)

SHIP OF LIBERTY

I think this a Matter of very great Consequence. We are all on board of one ship—The Ship of Liberty—to enjoy it ourselves but that it may spread through the World.

William Barton, Speech in the R.I. Convention
3 March 1790 (RCS R.I., 924; RCS SUPPL. R.I., #518, p. 336)

THE SHIP OF THE PUBLIC

Let the Ship of the Public float towards the harbour of tranquility & safety, or let her be in danger of being stranded on the rocks of discord & anarchy; we shall be conscious that some individuals have done their duty.

David Humphreys to George Washington, New Haven, Conn.
28 September 1787 (CC I, 262)

THE SHIP WE HAVE LAUNCHED

I sincerely wish we could as well associate our opinions as to the New Constitution: it is, however, by that comparison of ideas which you have done me the honor to propose, that so desirable an object is to be obtained, and whatever may be the difference between us upon this important subject, I yet acknowledge myself under much obligation for the extensive field you have opened to my view, discovering the quicksands & Rocks to be guarded against, in directing the ship we have launched.

Edward Carrington to James Monroe New York
15 September 1788 (RCS SUPPL. VA., #344, p. 139)

VESSEL

I apprehended, in particular, that the dispute about representation would be the rock, on which the vessel containing all our hopes would be dashed.

“Aristides” (Alexander Contee Hanson):
Remarks on the Proposed Plan of a Federal Government
31 January 1788 (CC 3, 523)



I think, with the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. Vining), that the great wheels of the political machine should first be set in motion; and with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. Jackson), that the vessel ought to be got under way, lest she lays by the wharf till she beat off her rudder, and runs herself a wreck on shore.

Elbridge Gerry, Speech in the U.S. House of Representatives
8 June 1789 (RCS BoR I, 328)



However some men may argue, and others may wrangle, it is the duty of every man who wishes well to his country, to save that vessel from shipwreck of which under GOD, WASHINGTON is commander.

Newport Herald, 23 July 1789 (RCS SUPPL. R.I., #315, p. 238)

A VESSEL JUST LAUNCHED

Our constitution, sir, is like a vessel just launched, and lying at the wharf, she is untried, you can hardly discover any one of her properties; it is not known how she will answer her helm, or lay her course.

James Jackson, Speech in the U.S. House of Representatives
8 June 1789 (RCS BoR I, 306)

A WORM EATEN BOTTOM OF A SHIP

The *fiddlers* were extremely fond of having it examined, because they said it was like a rich piece of plate, which the more it be rubbed shines the brighter. The *antifiddlers* said it was like a worm eaten bottom of a ship, the defects of which would more evidently appear the more it was ripped to pieces; they were therefore for rejecting it at once, without any examination at all.

Jeremy Belknap: *The Foresters, An American Tale*
Boston, 1792 (RCS SUPPL. MASS., #983, p. 477)